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EXAMINING THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FOSTER
CHILDREN IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND THE COUNTY OF
SAN BERNARDINO, CALIFORNIA BETWEEN
JULY 1984 AND JULY 1997

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Psychology: General-Experimental

by
Bonnie Kay Rice

June 1998

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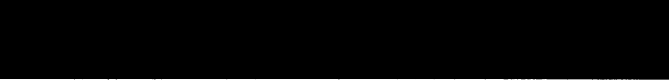
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Bonnie Kay Rice
June 1998

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the California and San Bernardino County, California foster care population before and after the intervention of "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California," published in 1990 and the passage of California Senate Bill 1125 (SB 1125) in 1991. The sample included all children in Social Service/Welfare Supervised Foster Care in July, 1984 through July, 1997. A retrospective analysis of archival data was conducted using descriptive statistics and graphical techniques to assess changes in trends over time. The number of children in foster care did not decrease after the 1990 - 1992 intervention. The desired changes in the age of children in foster care appear to be making small steps in the direction indicated in "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California." In addition, the children are spending longer periods of time in care and the percentage of minority children in care continues to grow. Although the numbers may not show a positive trend developing at this point in time, the continuum of services being implemented under SB 1125 and subsequent legislation with the goal of helping prevent out-of-home placements and preserving the family may start to show the desired results over the next few years.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

During the last half of the 20th century, a body of research has developed regarding the emotional, behavioral, and demographic characteristics of children coming in contact with the foster care system. Research beginning in the late 1950s (e.g., DeFries, Jenkins, Williams, 1961; Fanshel & Maas, 1962; Mass & Engler, 1959) found a relationship between children growing up in a series of temporary foster homes and the increase in serious developmental and psychological problems they exhibited. Continuing research (e.g., Barth, 1990; Fanshel, Finch & Grundy, 1990; Fanshel & Shinn, 1978; McIntyre, Lounsbury, Berntson & Steel, 1988; Timberlake & Verkieck, 1987) indicates these problems not only continue to exist, but have grown in severity. The developmental and psychological problems have included identity disorders, personality disorders, substance abuse, and criminal activity, as well as impulsivity, aggression, truancy, sexual acting out, and lying. Starting with Maas & Engler in 1959, researchers labeled the experience of foster children spending long periods of time in a series of different foster homes as "foster care drift." With this identification and the ever increasing evidence of the problems developing in this group of children, professionals including psychologists, social workers, and physicians began examining the foster care system.

In 1980 the federal government passed Public Law No. 96-272 (PL 96-272), the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, with the goal of improving child welfare and foster care programs. Two objectives of this legislation were the prevention of unnecessary foster care placements and stopping foster care drift by providing the child with a permanent home. Particularly important in the permanency planning philosophy are the values it places on raising children in a family setting, the importance of the parent-child attachment, and the significance of the biological family in human connectedness (Maluccio & Fein, 1983). PL 96-272 includes major changes for Social Security Act programs dealing with the care of children who must be removed from their own homes by tying federal foster care funding to the implementation of policies related to family preservation and permanency planning (American Humane Association, 1995). Foster care funding is an uncapped entitlement, while the funds for family preservation are capped and disproportionately less.

PL 96-272 also marked a major shift in the philosophy of care for children in need from that of rescuing to one of protecting. In 1982 the State of California passed Senate Bill 14 (SB 14) to institute the federal changes authorized in PL 96-272 (California State Social Services Advisory Board, 1984). However, these changes were not implemented as policy in the County of San Bernardino until 1983. It is

important to note that policy changes coming about through the legislative process can be extremely slow.

Another theme running through the literature, particularly since 1984, is that the number of children in foster care is increasing and the characteristics of these children are undergoing significant changes (James Bell Associates, 1993; National Commission on Family Foster Care, 1991; Tataru, 1993; U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, 1989). These changes include age at entrance to the foster care system, age at exit from the foster care system, average age of children in foster care, ethnicity, type of placement, length of time in placement, and the behavioral, emotional and health problems of the children.

Toshio Tataru, Ph.D., Director of the American Public Welfare Association's (APWA) Research and Demonstration Department has conducted extensive national research using aggregate data on the characteristics of children in substitute care (Tataru, 1993, 1994). To develop a more complete picture of the children in care it is important to examine the number of children leaving as well as entering care. One technique used by Tataru is a population flow paradigm where the movement of children, both in and out of the substitute care system, can be analyzed. The type of aggregate data necessary for this analysis is available at many different levels of government.

To better understand the escalating problems within the foster care system and the children it serves, this thesis examined the history of providing care for children in need. It also examined the growth of and the changes in the foster care system, as measured by the number of children entering foster care between July 1984 and July 1996 in the State of California and the County of San Bernardino respectively. Any changing and/or developing trends in the characteristics of children entering care during this same time period were also examined.

History

Children enter this world totally dependent upon their parents. Historically when their parents cannot or will not care for them, society has created various ways to bridge this gap and assist the child to independence. This assistance can be traced back thousands of years, has taken many different forms, and has included many philosophical changes.

During early civilization, one of human's fundamental drives was that of survival. To increase their odds of day-to-day survival they formed groups and villages with leaders who were in charge of providing mutual protection and assistance to its members. Initially, this protection was provided by the village or group leader, but with the development of early religions, the primary responsibility of providing protection for widows, orphans and the ill

shifted from the village leader to religious establishments (Friedlander & Apte, 1974). The focus of this protection also shifted. What was once regarded as mutual protection and survival was now regarded as charity. As religions grew and became more important, providing charity to people in need became an important moral duty, particularly in the Jewish and Christian religions. One example of substitute care in early Egypt is recorded in the Bible in Exodus 2: 1-10 and involves the rescue of Moses from the bulrushes. The Egyptian pharaoh ordered the murder of all male Hebrew babies. To save her child, Moses' mother placed him in a basket in the river to be found by the pharaoh's daughter who took him into her home and raised him as her own.

The actual legal authority over children can be traced back to the first known compilation of civil law. The Hammurabi Code dates back to approximately 2150 B.C. in Babylonia and defines the parent-child relationship as a proprietary interest. The parent (the father for most of recorded history) had the right to treat his children as property. This included selling them and even putting them to death.

This concept of children being treated as property has persisted in legal codes throughout history. The Hebrew Code (approximately 800 B.C.) fully supported the concept of children as property and the child's absolute duty of respect to the father, even into adulthood, until the

father's death. In Roman Law (approximately 1753 B.C.) the doctrine of "patria potestas," paternal authority or the paternal power, established the powers and rights belonging to the head of the family in regard to his wife, children and even descendants coming from the male side of the family (Black, 1990; Radbill, 1974). In later years the actual laws were changed but the view of children as property persisted in Roman culture. This is only one example of an enduring cultural value which views the parents' rights as superseding the rights of children. The influence of Roman Law can be seen in early English law which upheld the parent's right to fully control their children. One major difference in early English law was the practice of allowing children to be emancipated at majority. During this period, children were also acquiring some legal rights and the "guardian ad litem" process was established. Guardian ad litem currently exist in our legal system and may be, but are not required to be, attorneys. The American Humane Association's Helping in Child Protective Services defines a guardian ad litem as an adult appointed by the court to represent the child in a judicial proceeding (p. 393).

English poor laws were the basis for relief and welfare payments in England from the 16th to the 20th century. In 1572, legislation was passed giving each parish the authority to levy a general tax to provide funds to help the poor. In England, this Statute of 1572 officially

transferred the responsibility of caring for people unable to care for themselves to the government. We have now seen the responsibility of caring for this group of people transitioning from the group leader to the religious establishment and back to the leaders of a much larger group - the government.

The Elizabethan Poor Law Act of 1601 pulled together three generations of poor laws into a general format which guided England's policy for over 300 years. The Elizabethan Poor Laws defined three classes of poor: the able-bodied poor who were placed in workhouses; the impotent poor (sick, old, demented and mothers with young children) who were placed in almshouses; and the dependent children (orphans, foundlings, children deserted by their families and children whose parents were unable to support them). The first choice for placement of dependent children was to give them to anyone willing to take responsibility and not expect any money for their care - a free home. If they were unable to find a free home, the child would be given or sold to the lowest bidder. This form of placement was identified as an apprenticeship or being indentured and usually involved children eight years of age and older. Boys were taught the trade of their caretaker and served until their 24th birthday. Girls were taught to be domestic servants and served until they were 21 years of age or married. This experience varied from good care and training to inadequate

care, brutality and exploitation.

Child welfare policy in the United States has its roots in Elizabethan Poor Law and, as in England, initially provided very little protection for children. As an example of just how strict society was during this time period, in Massachusetts, the Stubborn Child Act of 1628 allowed a stubborn or rebellious son, who would not obey his parents, to be put to death. Another example includes the Mosaic law passed in 1646 which imposed the death penalty on unruly children (Radbill, 1974). The early colonists also followed a strict code of behavior which disapproved of laziness and poverty. Poverty was considered proof of low moral quality and therefore, looked down upon.

In the 1850's, Reverend Charles Loring Brace founded the Children's Aid Society in New York City (Bremmer, 1970; Kadushin, 1974; Zietz, 1959). He saw the desperate plight of the children who were being placed in orphanages or simply left in the city streets to fend for themselves due to the inability of their parents to care for them. Brace developed a system called "placing out." He believed that farm families in the midwest could and would provide homes for these homeless children. Over 150,000 children rode the "orphan trains" to families in the midwest between 1854 and 1929 (Terpstra & McFadden, 1991). The commonly used expression "up for adoption" came into use at this time because children would stand upon blocks to be selected when

the orphan trains came into town. This process was the beginning of the foster care system in the United States and led to Charles Loring Brace being referred to as the father of agency-sponsored foster care in the United States.

In 1874, the Mary Ellen Wilson case initiated the first major movement to protect children in the United States (American Humane Association, 1995). Mary Ellen was an eight year old girl living in the tenements of New York City. She had been indentured at the age of 18 months and was frequently mistreated by her caretaker. When a church volunteer named Mrs. Wheeler heard Mary Ellen's cries for help she went to the authorities and asked for their assistance. She was told there was nothing they could do because there were no laws currently protecting children. Mrs. Wheeler went to the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and asked the director, Henry Birgh for help. Using the laws protecting animals, the case went to court with Mary Ellen eventually being placed with Mrs. Wheeler, and the caretaker being sentenced to one year in jail. The number of child abuse cases being brought to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals increased to the point that in 1875 the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded.

In 1909, the first White House Conference on Children was convened with representatives involved in the care of dependent and neglected children attending from every state

in the Union. This was one of the first times child welfare services had been addressed as a public issue and the understandings reached by the attendees marked the beginning of the standardization of child welfare work (Zietz, 1959). One of the main themes coming out of the conference was that children should be cared for in their own home rather than in group care, whenever possible (Friedlander & Apte, 1974; "Roosevelt Speaks," 1909). Action was much slower to take place, and orphanages or "children's homes" remained a primary child placement institution for many years.

Two influential organizations were created based on suggestions from the White House Conference. First, Congress created the U.S. Children's Bureau in 1912 to investigate and report on all matters concerning the welfare of children. The U.S. Children's Bureau's first chief was Julia C. Lathrop and the Bureau's initial project was a study of the incidence and causes of infant mortality. Secondly, in 1920 the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) was founded with the goal of developing standards for child care and child protection (Pasztor & Wayne, 1995). The Russell Sage Foundation provided the initial funding to establish CWLA which, through the years, has become a well respected national organization. It's primary purpose is supporting the welfare of children through the improvement of child welfare services. CWLA publishes a monthly journal titled Child Welfare as well as books, bibliographies and

standards for child care and protection. They also provide training, conferences and research on topics dealing with child welfare.

In 1935 the Child Welfare Services Program was authorized and funded under Title V of the Social Security Act. In 1967, this authorization was renumbered to Title IV B of the Social Security Act (NASW, 1987; Pine, 1986). States received federal funds for the care of children who were dependent, neglected, or in danger of becoming delinquent. This legislation marks a gradual shift in the type of child being served. Historically, pre-20th Century, privately funded substitute care including foster care, institutional care and adoption came about as a way to deal with children who were orphaned. With advances in medicine and technology, adult mortality decreased and a greater number of parents were able to care for their own children until they reached adulthood (Humphrey & Humphrey, 1988). A basic assumption of the new publicly funded foster care system was that out-of-home placement would be a temporary arrangement for the child. In the United States, this marked a major shift in the responsibility for these children away from extended families, religious organizations and private individuals. Legally and financially, dependent children were now placed in the hands of the government.

In the early 1960s, Dr. C. Henry Kempe became alarmed

by the large number of children being seen in his pediatric service for non-accidental injuries (Radbill, 1974). Based on Kempe's concern, in 1961, the American Academy of Pediatrics held a symposium on the problem of child abuse. This symposium and the identification of the "Battered Child Syndrome" (Kempe, 1962) led to a renewed interest in the plight of children in our country. Due to the efforts of the U.S. Children's Bureau, the Council of State Governments, the American Humane Association, and the American Medical Association, child abuse reporting legislation which encouraged the reporting of suspected child abuse was enacted in all states (Paulsen, 1974). The child abuse reporting law was instituted in the State of California in 1965. Over the ensuing years, legislative changes have led to many improvements in the initial reporting laws. The definition of who is considered a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse has greatly expanded and in turn, this expansion has led to a growing public awareness and better education on identifying and dealing with child abuse in general. On the other hand, this growing awareness and increased education has led to an ever increasing number of suspected child abuse reports being made to Child Protective Service agencies and children being placed in foster care.

Title IV E of the Social Security Act created an uncapped entitlement allowing states to receive

reimbursement for 50% of the cost of foster and group home care. As an entitlement, funding increased as the size of the caseloads increased. In addition, agencies can claim 50% of the case management costs of social worker staff to Title IV E funding along with up to 75% of the costs for all social worker training. Due to the limited amounts of money available for preventative services and the seemingly unlimited funds available for foster and group home placements, money became the driving force in placement decisions for many of California's children.

The County Welfare Directors of California, Chief Probation Officers Association of California, and the California Mental Health Directors Association include leaders of agencies working with children and families at risk on a daily basis. The complexity and seriousness of the problems they were coming up against, combined with an insufficient amount of funding and tools to deal with these problems, left these leaders deeply concerned. As a result, a rapidly increasing number of children were being placed in out-of-home care as the only placement to assure safety, supervision or mental health treatment.

Discussions among these groups led to the consensus that by working together more could be accomplished. In the Spring of 1990, utilizing a grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, this group prepared and published "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California - Reasons to

Invest in Services Which Prevent Out-of-Home Placement and Preserve Families."

A press release distributed by San Bernardino County, dated May 4, 1990 described this report as a "comprehensive study of trends and costs of out-of-home placement in California." One of the goals of this report was to advance the policy debate in California and Washington, DC regarding the urgent needs of children and to support these agencies in their efforts "to seek cost effective and humane alternatives to out-of-home placement for children at risk" (p. 1). To this end, the report was distributed to California legislators, members of the U.S. Congress, and numerous organizations dealing with children at risk. In addition, press releases and public presentations further increased the report's exposure and led to a great deal of attention in policy circles. One example is Pat Craig (Craig Associates), a Washington, DC lobbyist with the County Welfare Directors of California and San Bernardino County as two of her clients. They have used the information contained in this report to push for child welfare legislation for a number of years. Two specific areas included Family Preservation Legislation and the recently passed Welfare Reform Act (P. Craig, personal communication, October 3, 1997).

The authors looked at the California out-of-home care population between 1985 and 1989 and identified the

following ten reasons to invest in the families of California.

1. Between 1985 and 1989, the number of children in out-of-home care in California increased 65%. Total expenditures for this care increased 75% - over \$310 million.
2. Foster children are getting younger. In four years, the number of children in foster care who were less than four years old increased 165% to nearly 19,000.
3. The number of babies in foster care is escalating at a shocking pace. Nearly 4,400 infants were in foster care in 1989 - an increase of 235% in four years.
4. Children are staying longer in foster care.
5. 70% of the children in foster care under social services supervision were removed from home as a result of endangerment due to parental neglect, incapacity or absence.
6. Nearly two-thirds of the children in out-of-home care are minority children. California's ethnic diversity requires targeted strategies which are culturally relevant to minority families.
7. The state's resources for serving delinquent children have been directed to the most expensive types of care - out-of-home placement in group homes and the California Youth Authority.
8. In the absence of a mental health system for children in California, more and more children are being placed in the most intensive and expensive foster care group homes -

psychological and psychiatric programs.

9. Extended families, which are playing an increasing role in the care of abused and neglected children, receive little support in their efforts to reunify and preserve their families.
10. In the absence of an investment in strategies which keep families safely together and prevent the need for out-of-home care, by 1994 California's foster care caseload will grow to 90,000 children and costs will double to \$1.8 billion. (CWDA, et al.)

The authors also included recommended investments or commitments, both philosophical and financial, to home and community based strategies that would help prevent out-of-home placement of children and thereby, preserve families. Most of these recommended investments can be, at least partially, seen in the Child Welfare Legislation that soon followed.

The authors of "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" continued their work in this area and were instrumental in the development and passage of California Senate Bill 1125 (SB 1125) in 1991. This bill was the first major reorganization of Child Welfare Services since the passage of PL 96-262 in 1980 and California SB 14 in 1982. Some of the significant changes included:

1. Changing the Child Welfare Services program from four separate programs (ER - Emergency Response, FR - Family Reunification, FM - Family Maintenance, and PP -

- Permanency Planning) to one service delivery program.
2. Returning to one case plan as the foundation of Child Welfare Services and having the ability to include family preservation services as part of the case plan.
 3. Sought to expand use of voluntary programs and placements and increase the length of time and funding available in this area. Unfortunately, the State of California failed to obtain the necessary IV-E waiver and these expansions were never implemented.
 4. Increased flexibility of local program operation which increased the social worker's ability to provide direct services to clients. (Fox, 1991)

Following is a partial list of the recommended investments along with examples (noted by CA/SB) of how they were addressed in California and San Bernardino County by the SB 1125 legislation and with Family Preservation/Family Support (FP/FS) funding which became available in 1993. This is by no means a complete list, but it reinforces the fact that out of the publication of "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" and passage of SB 1125 the State of California and the County of San Bernardino are in the process of making investments in services and policies which will assist in preventing out-of-home placements and help preserve families in California:

1. Program and fiscal policies which promote alternatives to out-of-home

care through:

- Increased state and federal funding for home and community based family preservation and placement prevention services.

CA/SB - Family Preservation/Family Support funds became available and have been used, particularly in San Bernardino County, to fund public and private, non-profit agencies providing a wide assortment of FP/FS services.

- An easing of structural mandates and greater flexibility in categorical funding streams so that local agencies have the flexibility to address the individual needs of children and families.

CA/SB - In San Bernardino County, SB 1125 has enabled social workers to provide families with goods and services that allow the children to remain safely in their homes.

- By tapping into federal Title XIX - Medicaid funding San Bernardino County has been able to place Public Health Nurses in local Child Welfare Services offices.

2. Aggressive service strategies which confront parental substance abuse:
 - Expansion of residential and day treatment programs for pregnant women who use drugs and new mothers with

babies exposed to alcohol or drugs.

CA/SB - In San Bernardino County, Family Preservation funds have been used to improve and license child care facilities at drug treatment programs and pay for parenting and nutrition classes.

- The Perinatal Coalition of the San Bernardino County's Children's Network has developed protocols for use in all area hospitals to assess and report maternal substance abuse.

3. Establish a "base-line" of information on the conditions of children and families involved with the out-of-home care system through an in-depth characteristics survey which provided:

- Information on the age, gender, ethnicity and economic status of parents and children:

- Information specifying the reasons for initial placement and the underlying conditions of children and their parents, including mental illness and the extent of family involvement with alcohol and drugs;

CA/SB - The Child Welfare Research Center located at the University of California, Berkeley collects statewide data on children in foster care and publishes information on a yearly basis. The most current publication is "Performance Indicators for Child Welfare Services in California: 1996."

- California has recently implemented a

statewide computer systems - Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) which will be gathering consistent information from every county in the state.

- Information identifying the extent of child and family involvement with other public agencies;

CA/SB - San Bernardino County is in the process of developing an Interagency Index between the Department of Children's Services, Department of Behavioral Health, Department of Public Health, and the Probation Department. This will enable the agencies to work together to ensure the clients are receiving the necessary services.

4. In partnership with minority communities, targeted strategies which address the needs of minority families through:
 - Development and implementation of relevant placement prevention and family preservation services for minority families;

CA/SB - San Bernardino County recently funded a private, non-profit agency to provide bilingual/bicultural counseling.

- Participate in cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity training by public child welfare, probation and mental health professionals;

CA/SB - San Bernardino County sends all newly hired

social workers to an Orientation and Induction training which includes Cultural Sensitivity Training and on-going ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) training.

5. Federal and state policies which promote the viability of out-of-home placement with a relative.

CA/SB - Developments in this area have been more recent and will be addressed in the Discussion Section.

6. Federal and state policies which promote the use of family foster homes in lieu of more restrictive and expensive placement alternatives.

CA/SB - Developments in this area have been more recent and will be addressed in the Discussion Section.

Recommended Investments 7, 8, and 9 will be addressed briefly in the Discussion Section.

7. Develop alternatives to group home and CYA placements for delinquent youth.
8. Develop a mental health system for children.
9. Develop and implement performance measures for group home programs which, at a minimum, identify the relative effectiveness of services provided and the extent to which the services assist the child's case plan goals.

In summary, with the publication of their report in 1990, the agencies charged with the care of California's

abused, neglected, delinquent, and mentally ill children being placed in out-of-home care identified the seriousness and the scope of the problems being encountered by this population. The information was then distributed to the individuals, agencies, and legislative bodies responsible for making policy changes and funding allocations. This led to the passage of SB 1125 in 1991 which mandated some of the changes recommended in "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" and opened the door for counties to implement others.

The data used to evaluate the ten reasons listed above included children in out-of-home care in the State of California in FY 1984/85 - FY 1988/89 with the children being supervised by the following agencies: Social Services/Welfare, Probation, and Mental Health. This thesis looked at a smaller population (Social Services/Welfare Supervised Children in out-of-home care) over a longer period of time (July 1984 through July 1997) in two categories (California and San Bernardino County). A retrospective analysis of data collected for the State of California between July 1984 and July 1997 was used to determine whether or not there has been any amelioration of the problems cited by the committee. Specifically, the problems to be addressed for children in Social Services/Welfare supervised out-of-home placement include:

1. Reason 1 - The number of children in out-of-home

- care in California is increasing,
2. Reason 2 - Foster children are getting younger,
 3. Reason 4 - Children are staying longer in foster care,
 4. Reason 6 - Nearly two-thirds of the children in out-of-home care are minority children,
 5. Reason 7, 8, & 9 - Trends in the type of out-of-home placement being used.

The hypothesis is that, if the changes recommended by the publication's authors and reinforced by SB 1125 have occurred we should detect the following trends in the indicators listed below gradually occurring after the Spring 1990 publication date and the passage of SB 1125 in 1991.

1. A decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care,
2. A leveling off or increase in:
 - a. the average age of children entering foster care
 - b. the average age of children in foster care, and
 - c. a decrease in the average age of children exiting foster care
3. A decrease in the average number of months children are in placement.
4. A decrease in the percentage of minority children in care.
5. Types of placements are also examined to identify any trends over time.

METHOD

Sample

The sample included all children in Social Service/Welfare Supervised Foster Care in the month of July in the years 1984 through 1997 in the State of California and in the County of San Bernardino, California respectively. The data were collected in aggregate form. No individual child was contacted, thereby eliminating any problem with confidentiality issues.

Demographic data on the subjects was supplied by the State of California Department of Social Services - Statistical Services Bureau. PL 96-272 mandated that states must develop a statewide system indicating where every child was placed if they wanted to receive Title IV-E funding for foster care expenses. California developed the Foster Care Information System (FCIS) which receives foster care information statewide via the SOC 158 form. This is a computer generated form mandated by California State regulations. The information gathered from this form aids in determining the amount of funding each county will receive and is also used in the payment process for foster care providers. The state and federal regulations and the financial process connected to the SOC 158 form ensure a high degree of accuracy in the data collection.

Procedure

A retrospective analysis of archival data was conducted

using descriptive statistics and graphical techniques to assess changes in trends over time. SPSS for Windows was used to produce the graphics. Each characteristic was examined over a fourteen year period (1984-1997) to determine if any significant changes had occurred after the 1990-1992 intervention which included the publication of "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" and the passage and implementation of SB 1125.

To determine if the increasing number of children in out-of-home care was based solely on the number of children entering care, a "substitute care population flow paradigm" (Tatara, 1994) was used. Of particular importance in this process is the use of aggregate data of the type detailed above. By using the number of children in care at the beginning of the year, the number of children entering care during the year, the number of children leaving care during the year, and the number of children in care at the end of the year, the population flow, entry rates, and exits rates were calculated.

The entry rates were calculated by dividing the number of children entering foster care by the total number of children served in foster care each year. Exit rates were calculated by dividing the number of children leaving foster care by the total number of children served in foster care each year. The gain or loss in the foster care population for each year was calculated by subtracting the Entry Rate

from the Exit Rate.

All numbers, percentages, and rates are based on the State of California and San Bernardino County foster care population, not the State of California or San Bernardino County general population.

RESULTS

Data for hypothesis 1 through 5 were graphed and the slope of the data were examined before 1990 and after 1992 to determine if the hypothesized changes, based on the intervention - publication of "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" and the implementation of SB 1125, had occurred.

Hypothesis #1 - There will be a decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care. This hypothesis was not supported. A decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care did not occur in either the State of California or San Bernardino County. As shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, the slope continued upward to a fourteen year high for the number of children in out-of-home care in both California - 103,094, and San Bernardino County - 4,443.

Figure 1

Number of Open Foster Care Cases By Year

State of California

1984-1997

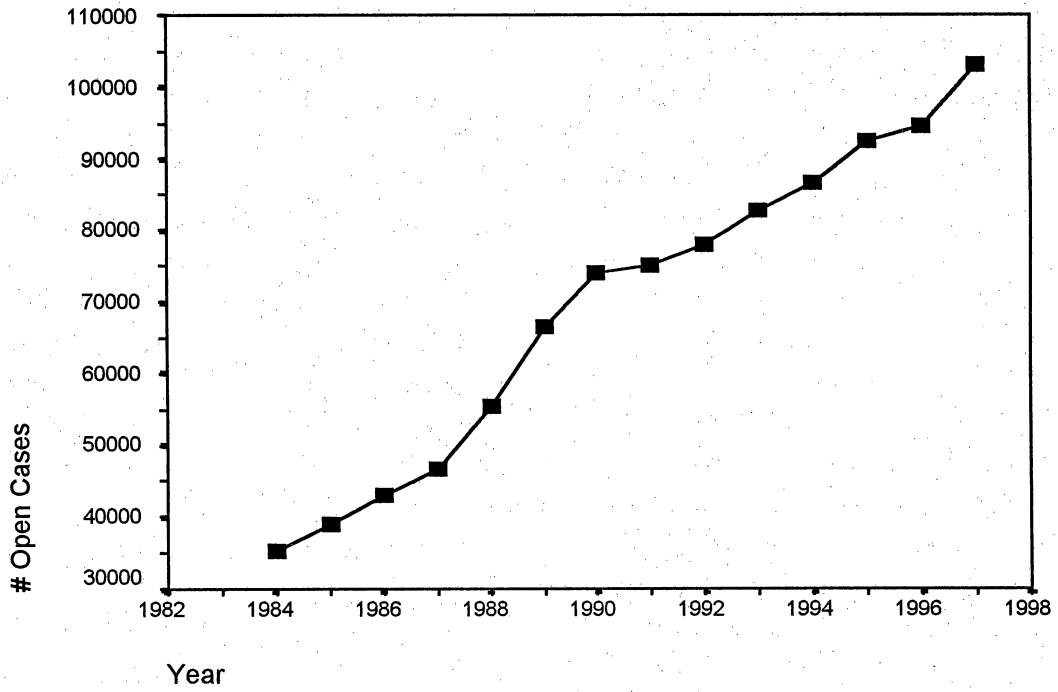
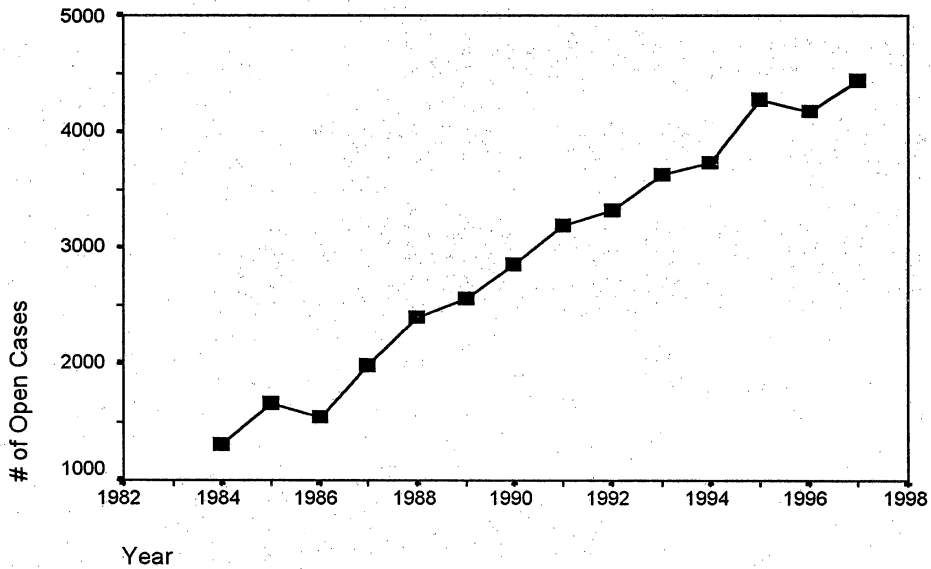


Figure 2

Number of Open Foster Care Cases By Year
San Bernardino Co.
1984-1997

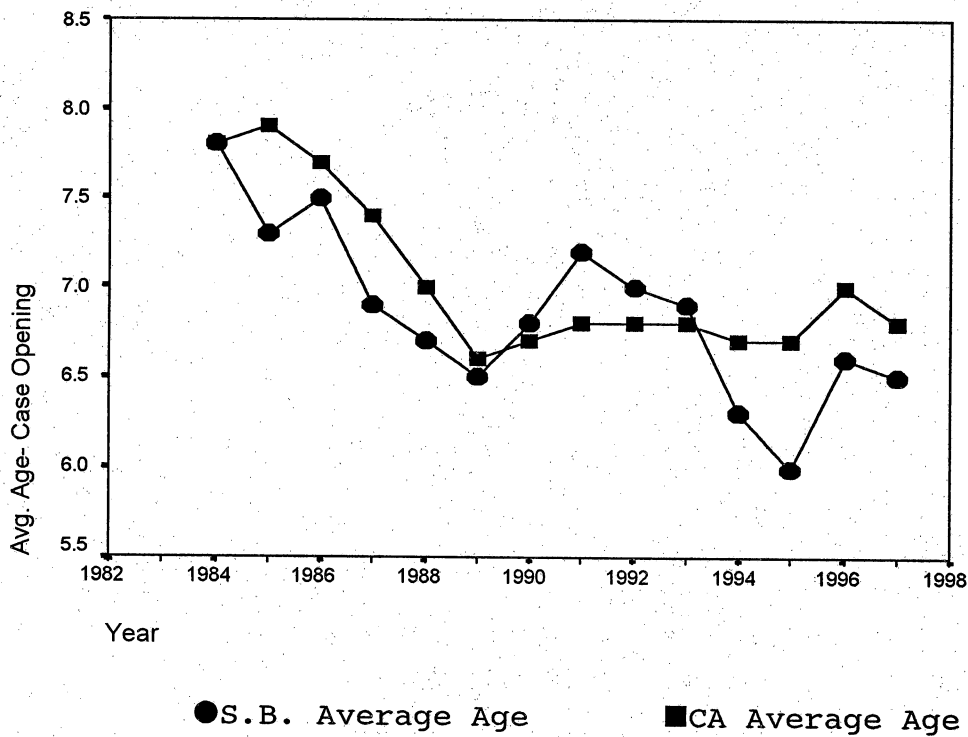


Hypothesis #2a - There will be a leveling off or increase in the average age of children entering foster care. As shown in Figure 3, there appears to be a decrease in the average age of children entering foster care between 1984 and 1989 in both California and San Bernardino County. In California, from 1989 to 1997 the age appears to level off. San Bernardino County's age experiences several fluxations during this time period. California's average age was 7.8 years in 1984, 6.6 years in 1989 and increased to 6.8 years in 1997. In San Bernardino County the average age was 7.8

years in 1984, 6.5 years in 1989 and returned to 6.5 years in 1997 after a slight decrease in 1995.

Figure 3

Average Age at Case Opening
California and San Bernardino County
1984 - 1997

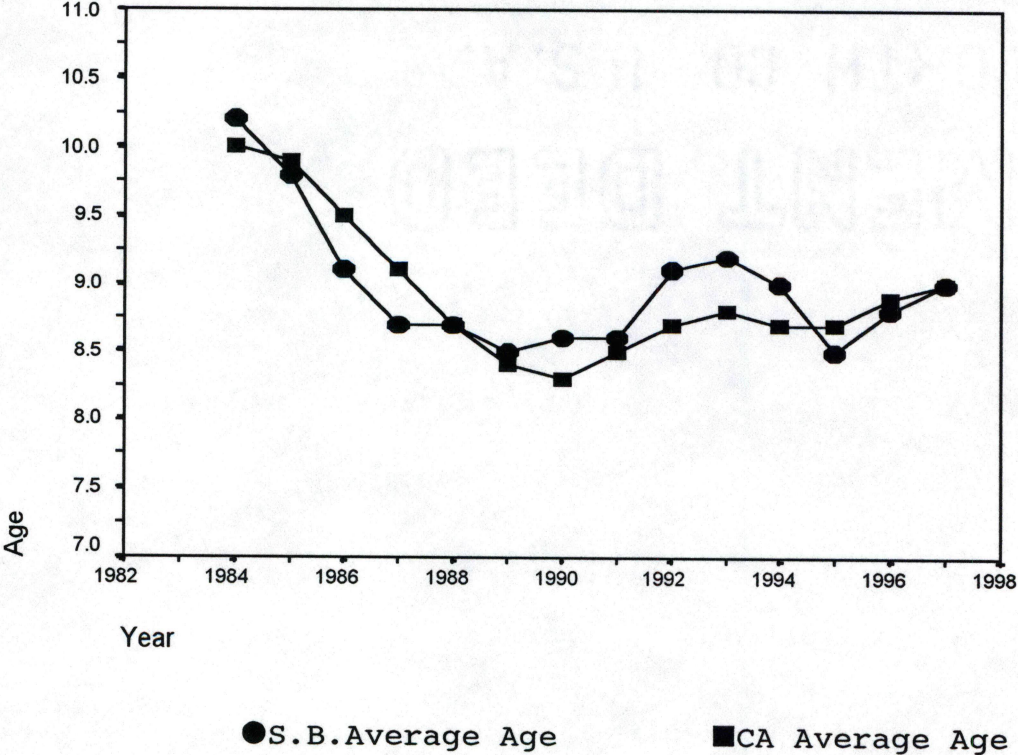


Hypothesis #2b - There will be a leveling off or increase in the average age of children in foster care as a whole. As shown in Figure 4, there appears to be a decrease in the average age of children in foster care as a whole between 1984 and 1989 in both California and San Bernardino County. From 1990 to 1997 in both California and San Bernardino

County there appears to be a general leveling off of average age. San Bernardino County appears to experience both an increase and a decrease in the average age between 1990 and 1997. In California, the average age was 10.0 years in 1984, 8.4 years in 1989 and increased to 9.0 years in 1997. In San Bernardino County, the average age was 10.2 years in 1984, 8.5 years in 1989 and increased to 9.0 years in 1997.

Figure 4

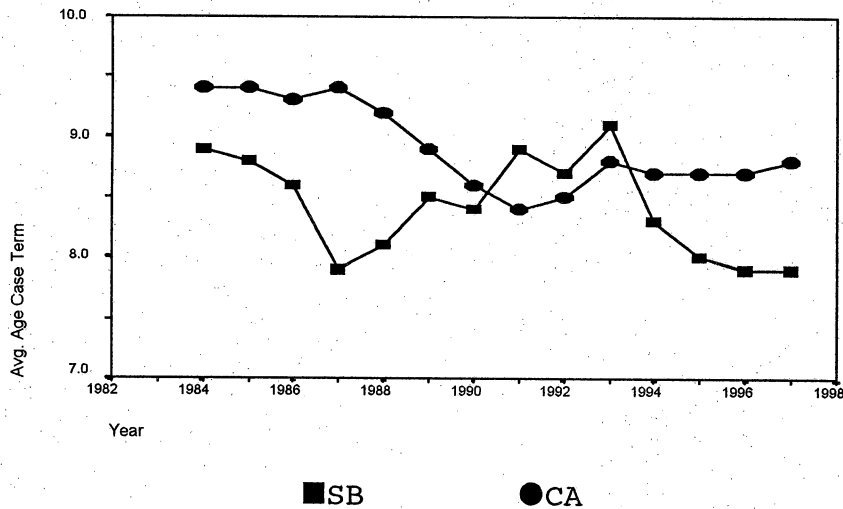
Average Age of Foster Children
 California and San Bernardino County
 1984 - 1997



Hypothesis #2c - There will be a decrease in the average age of children exiting foster care. As shown in Figure 5, there appears to have been a general decrease in the average age of children exiting foster care between 1984 and 1990 in both California and San Bernardino County. In California, from 1991 to 1997 there appears to have been a gradual leveling off. San Bernardino County appears to experience an increase and several decreases between 1991 and 1997. In California, the average age of children exiting foster care was 9.4 years in 1984, 8.9 years in 1989 and decreased to 8.8 years in 1997. In San Bernardino County the average age was 8.9 years in 1984, 8.5 years in 1989 and decreased to 7.9 years in 1997.

Figure 5

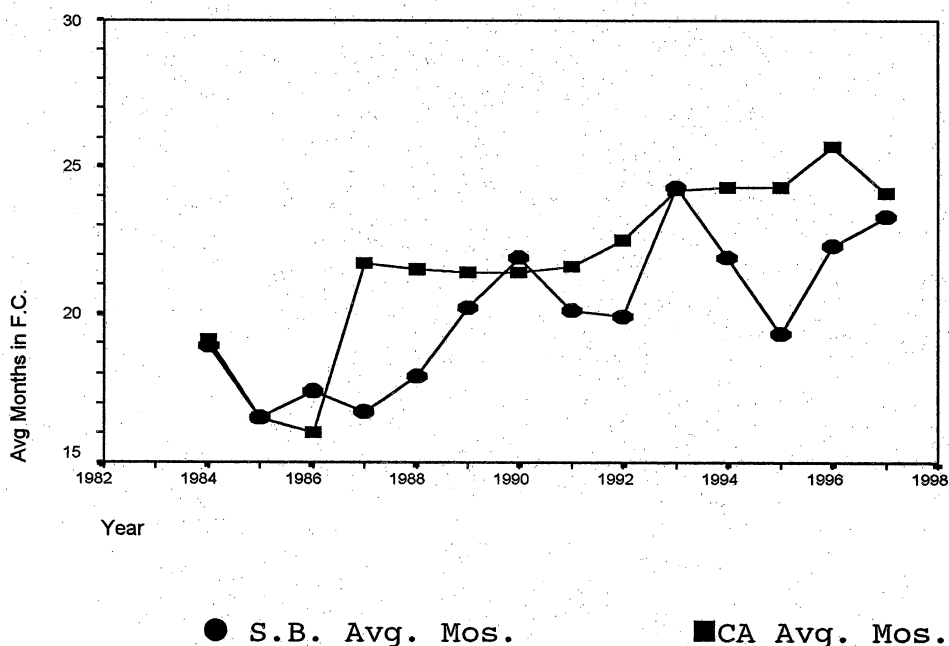
Average Age at Case Termination
California and San Bernardino County
1984 - 1997



Hypothesis #3 - There will be a decrease in the average number of months children are in placement. As shown in Figure 6, the average number of months children are in placement did not appear to decrease in either California or San Bernardino County. In California, the average months in placement were 21.4 months in 1989 and 24.1 months in 1997 for an increase of 2.7 months. In San Bernardino County, the average months in placement were 20.2 months in 1989 and 23.3 months in 1997 for an increase of 3.1 months.

Figure 6

Average Months in Placement
California and San Bernardino County
1984 - 1997



Hypothesis #4 - There will be a decrease in the percentage of minority children in care. In California, the total minority population in foster care was approximately 62% in 1989 and 66% in 1997. In San Bernardino County, the total minority population in foster care was approximately 47% in 1989 and 53% in 1997. As shown in Table 1, a decrease did not occur.

Examination of the specific minority groups indicates that most of the increase has occurred in the Hispanic population. This increase has also occurred in both the general population in California and San Bernardino County.

Table 1

Percentage of Minority Children in Foster Care Population

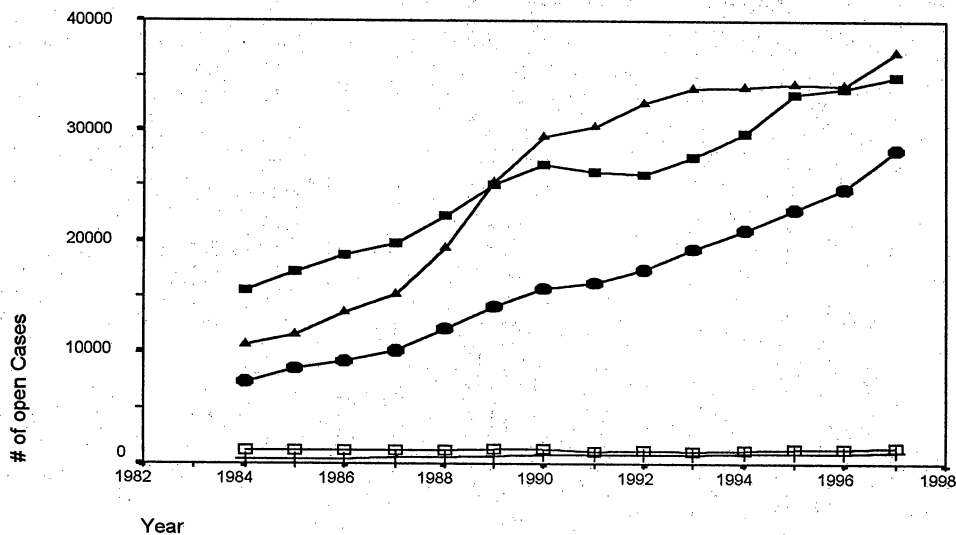
Ethnicity	<u>California</u>		<u>Change</u>	<u>San Bernardino County</u>		
	<u>1989</u>	<u>1997</u>		<u>1989</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>Change</u>
Hispanic	21.2%	27.4%	+6.2	22.1%	27.0%	+4.9
Black	38.1%	36.0%	- 2.1	23.1%	24.2%	+ 1.1
Am. Ind/Alsk.Nat.	1.0%	1.0%	0	0.4%	0.7%	+0.3
Asian/Pac Isl/Filipino	1.9%	1.4%	- 0.5	1.2%	0.6%	- 0.6
Total Minority Foster Care Pop.	62.2%	65.8%	+3.6	46.8%	52.5%	+5.7

Figure 7 (California) and Figure 8 (San Bernardino County) indicate changes in the numbers of children of varying ethnicities in the foster care population over time. These figures do not take into consideration the changes in ethnicities in the general population over time.

As shown in Figure 7, there appears to be a steady increase in the Hispanic population in foster care in California between 1984 and 1997. An increase is also seen in the Black and White foster care population between 1984 and 1997 but the increases were not as gradual. The Black population increased rapidly between 1987 and 1990 and then the increases became more gradual. The White population experienced a slight decrease in 1990 through 1992 and then continued to increase. The Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipino and American Indian/Alaskan Native foster care population appears to remain the same.

Figure 7

Ethnicity of Open Foster Care Cases
State of California
1984 - 1997

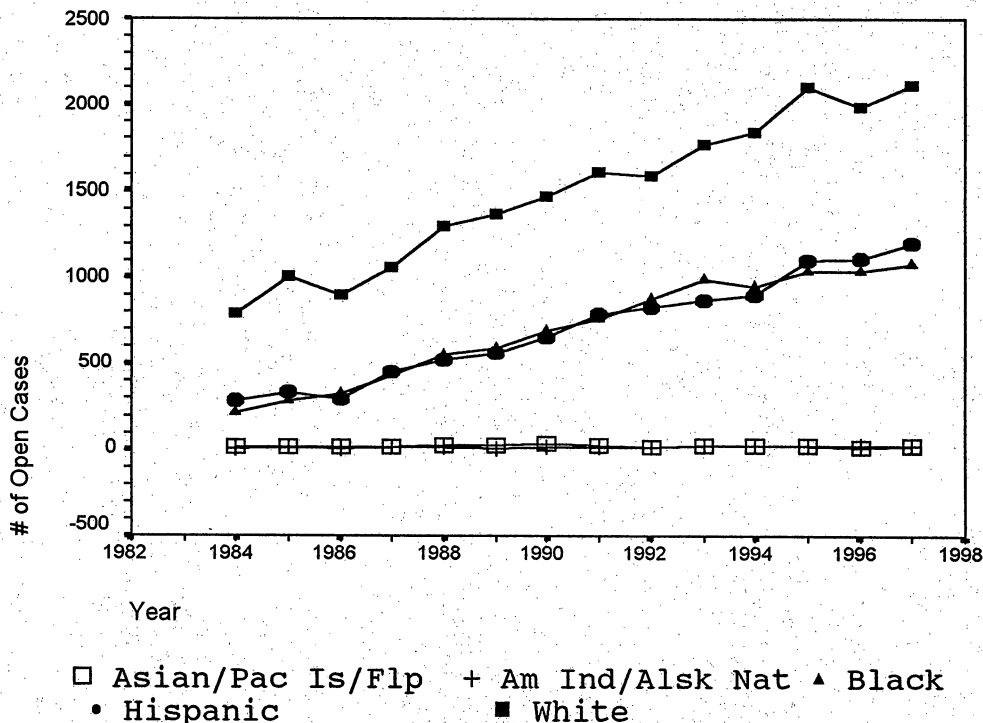


□ Asian/Pac Is/Flp + Am Ind/Alsk Nat ▲ Black
 • Hispanic ■ White

As shown in Figure 8, there appears to be a gradual increase in the White, Hispanic and Black foster care population in San Bernardino County between 1984 and 1997. The Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipino and American Indian/Alaskan Native foster care population appears to remain the same.

Figure 8

Ethnicity of Open Foster Care Ca
San Bernardino County
1984 - 1997



Hypothesis #5 - Types of placements were also examined to identify any trends over time. The most obvious trend in Figure 9 (California) and to a lesser degree or possibly a

delayed reaction in Figure 10 (San Bernardino County) is the increased use of Relative Foster Family Homes and the leveling off in use of Nonrelative Foster Family Homes. In California, the use of Nonrelative Foster Family Homes was 49% in 1989 and decreased to 32% in 1997. At the same time, Relative Foster Family Homes increased from 39% in 1989 to 46% in 1997. In San Bernardino County, the use of Nonrelative Foster Family Homes also decreased but not as much as in the State of California as a whole. In 1989 it was 51% and the use decreased to 45% by 1997. Relative Foster Family Homes increased from 42% in 1989 to 47% in 1997.

Figure 9

Number of Open Cases by Placement Type
State of California
1984 - 1997

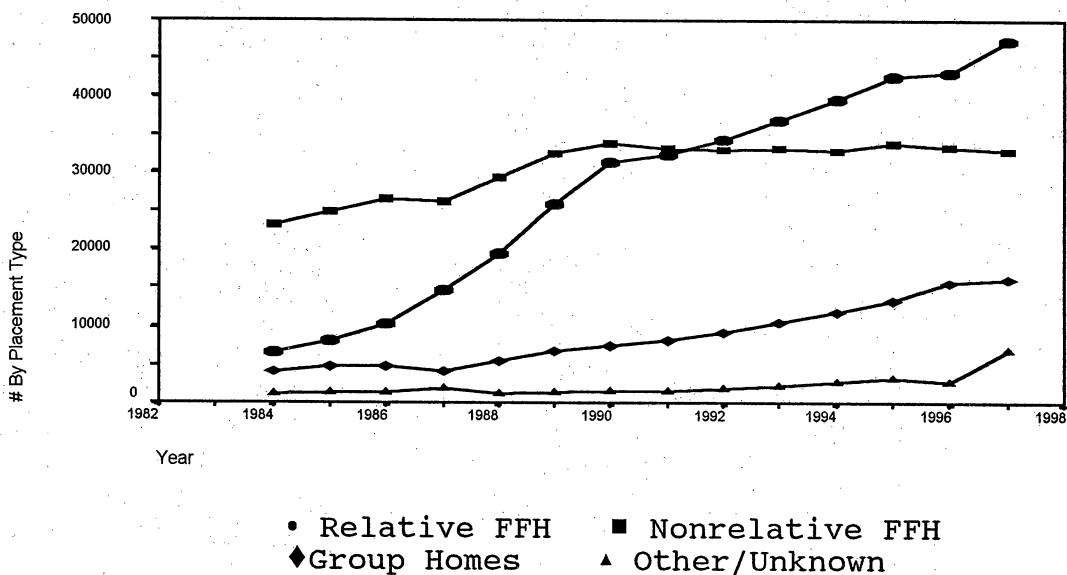
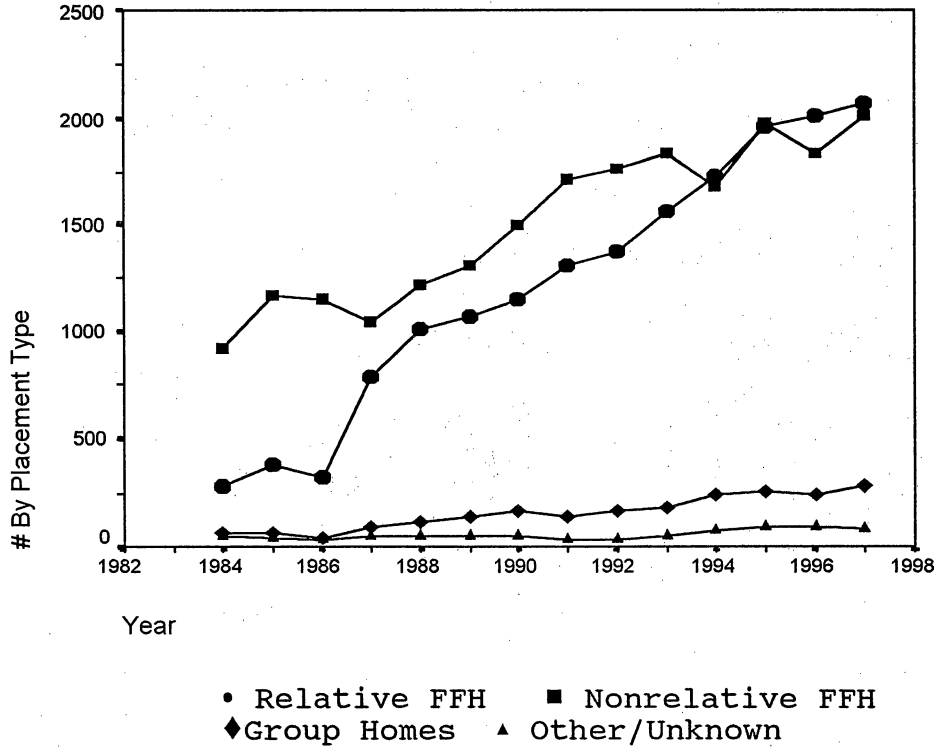


Figure 10

Number of Open Cases by Placement Type
San Bernardino County
1984 - 1997



As shown in Table 2, the growth in California's foster care population was greater in years 1985 through 1990 than it was in years 1991 through 1997. There appears to be an upturn occurring in 1997 but the data for the next few years will need to be examined before this can be determined.

Table 2: California Foster Care Population With Flow Data - July 1984 through July 1997

Year	In Care Start of Year	Entered Care	Total Served	^a Left Care	In Care End of Year	% Diff. From Yr to Yr
1985	35,176	18,660	53,836	14,862	38,974	+10.8%
1986	38,974	21,861	60,835	17,840	42,995	+10.3%
1987	42,995	22,638	65,633	18,883	46,750	+ 8.7%
1988	46,750	23,495	70,245	14,809	55,436	+18.6%
1989	55,436	28,017	83,453	16,925	66,528	+20.0%
1990	66,528	29,004	95,532	21,564	73,968	+11.2%
1991	73,968	26,913	100,881	25,915	74,966	+ 1.4%
1992	74,966	26,705	101,671	23,786	77,885	+ 3.9%
1993	77,885	26,805	104,690	21,948	82,602	+ 6.1%
1994	82,742	28,555	111,297	24,695	86,602	+ 4.8%
1995	86,602	31,040	117,642	25,108	92,534	+ 6.9%
1996	92,534	28,233	120,767	26,009	94,758	+ 2.4%
1997	94,758	30,311	125,069	21,975	103,094	+ 8.8%

Note. Data Source - State of California, Department of Social Services, Statistical Services Bureau

a) Statistical Services Bureau states there are some problems with the exact number of terminations per year. Children turning 18 or entering a Probation facility, for example, may not be accurately counted. The number of cases open at the end of the year and the number of children entering care are accurate, therefore, the Left Care column has been adjusted accordingly.

Movement in and out of California foster care system based on entry rates and exit rates indicates there have been increases in the total population every year from 1985 through 1997.

Table 3: California Foster Care Population with Flow Data - July 1994 through July 1997

Year	Entry Rate (a) b	Exit Rate (b) c	a b-a
1985	0.347	0.276	-0.071
1986	0.359	0.293	-0.066
1987	0.345	0.288	-0.057
1988	0.335	0.211	-0.124
1989	0.336	0.203	-0.133
1990	0.304	0.226	-0.078
1991	0.267	0.257	-0.010
1992	0.263	0.234	-0.029
1993	0.256	0.210	-0.046
1994	0.266	0.222	-0.044
1995	0.264	0.213	-0.051
1996	0.234	0.215	-0.019
1997	0.242	0.176	-0.066

Note. The following rates are calculated with data from Table 2.

Entry Rate = # Entered Care ÷ Total # Served Exit Rate = # Left Care ÷ Total # Served

^a The result of b-a determines the extent of gain or loss in the foster care population for a given year. A positive number indicates a decrease in the population while a negative number indicates an increase in the population.

^bThis figure can be interpreted as: 34.7% of the children served by the foster care system during 1985 were those who entered care during that year.

° On the other hand, this figure means that 27.6% of the children served by the foster care system during 1985 left care during the year.

As shown in Table 4, the growth in San Bernardino County's foster care population was greater in 1985 through 1991 than it was in 1992 through 1997. However, the differences from year to year appear to be more erratic than California's differences in Table 2.

Table 4: San Bernardino Foster Care Population with Flow Data - July 1994 through July 1997

Year	In Care Start of Year	Entered Care	Total Served	^a Left Care	In Care End of Year	% Diff. From Yr to Yr
1985	1,316	856	2,172	517	1,655	+25.8%
1986	1,655	1,070	2,725	1,186	1,539	- 7.0%
1987	1,539	1,261	2,800	817	1,983	+28.9%
1988	1,983	1,193	3,176	776	2,400	+21.9%
1989	2,400	1,145	3,545	982	2,563	+ 6.8%
1990	2,563	1,297	3,860	1,001	2,859	+11.6%
1991	2,859	1,380	4,239	1,047	3,192	+11.7%
1992	3,192	906	4,098	768	3,330	+ 4.3%
1993	3,330	1,004	4,334	701	3,633	+ 9.1%
1994	3,633	1,357	4,990	1,256	3,734	+ 2.8%
1995	3,734	1,906	5,560	1,354	4,286	+14.8%
1996	4,286	1,629	5,915	1,741	4,174	- 2.6%
1997	4,174	1,654	5,828	1,385	4,443	+ 6.4%

Note. Data Source - State of California, Department of Social Services, Statistical Services Bureau

a) Statistical Services Bureau states there are some problems with the exact number of terminations per year. Children turning 18 or entering a Probation facility, for example, may not be accurately counted. The number

of cases open at the end of the year and the number of children entering care are accurate, therefore, the Left Care column has been adjusted accordingly.

Movement in and out of the San Bernardino County foster care system based on entry rates and exit rates indicates there have been increases in the foster care population every year from 1984 through 1997 except in 1986 and 1996.

Table 5: San Bernardino County Foster Care Population with Flow Data - July 1994 through July 1997

Year	Entry Rate (a) b	Exit Rate (b) c	a b-a
1985	0.394	0.238	-0.156
1986	0.393	0.435	+0.042
1987	0.450	0.292	-0.158
1988	0.376	0.244	-0.132
1989	0.323	0.277	-0.046
1990	0.336	0.259	-0.077
1991	0.326	0.247	-0.079
1992	0.221	0.187	-0.034
1993	0.232	0.162	-0.070
1994	0.272	0.252	-0.020
1995	0.338	0.240	-0.098
1996	0.275	0.294	+0.019
1997	0.284	0.278	-0.006

Note. The following rates are calculated with data from Table 4.

$$\text{Entry Rate} = \# \text{ Entered Care} \div \text{Total \# Served} \quad \text{Exit Rate} = \# \text{ Left Care} \div \text{Total \# Served}$$

^a The result of b-a determines the extent of gain or loss in the foster care population for a given year. A positive number indicates a decrease in the population, while a negative number indicates an increase in the population.

^b This figure can be interpreted as: 39.4% of the children served by the foster care system during 1985 were those who entered care during that year.

^c On the other hand, this figure means that 23.8% of the children served by the foster care system during 1995 left care during the year.

DISCUSSION

A decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care between 1989 and 1997 did not occur. The desired changes in the age of children referred to in Hypothesis 2a, b, and c appear to be making small steps in the right direction but progress is slow. In addition, the children are spending longer periods of time in care and the percentage of minority children in care continues to grow. The workgroup which developed "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" and later, wrote California SB 1125, started their assessment of out-of-home placement trends with the goal of working together to develop and encourage policy and procedures which would ultimately reduce the number of children in out-of-home placements through an investment in a continuum of family services. Again, this did not happen if you look only at the numbers. If you look deeper it becomes clear that a continuum of services is slowly developing but has not yet gained the momentum to overcome an array of serious societal issues.

During the Families Helping Families Conference in San Francisco, CA in February, 1998 Richard Barth, Ph.D., UC Berkeley School of Social Work, Child Welfare Research Center, was asked why he believed the number of children in foster care placement has not decreased significantly since the publication of "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" and the passage of SB 1125. He discussed two

different issues he believes have contributed to the increased numbers:

- the increase in perinatal drug exposure (substance abuse in general)
- increased use of Kinship Care (Relative Foster Family Homes).

Increase in Perinatal Drug Exposure

The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health - Family Support Services provided information from a State of California Perinatal Substance Exposure Study which developed a profile of alcohol and drug use during pregnancy in California in 1992. In a comparison of the California State Prevalence Rate, Riverside County Prevalence Rate, and San Bernardino County Prevalence Rate, San Bernardino County ranked highest in the use of alcohol, illicit drugs, non-illicit drugs, and tobacco. Drug use in general and perinatal substance exposure is a continuing problem in California as it is in the rest of the country. A study conducted in San Bernardino County in 1995 found that 60-80% of the families involved with Child Welfare Services cited substance abuse as a causative factor in their court petition (K. Watkins, personal communication, November 12, 1997).

The Increased Use of Kinship Care

The most common use of the term kinship care is defined as "out-of-home care provided by relatives to children in

the custody of state child welfare agencies" (Hegar & Scannapieco, 1995). Kinship care is a complicated issue. In "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" recommended investment 5, was to "promote the viability of out-of-home placement with a relative." Some of the benefits include care-givers who are familiar to the child in a time of family crisis, usually means the child will be placed within a familiar racial or ethnic community, and provides a less restrictive and usually more stable placement for the child (Hegar, et al., 1995). This trend has made kinship care an attractive choice for child welfare workers making a placement decision. In California and San Bernardino County, Relative Foster Family Home placements have increased. At the same time, the percentage of Non-relative Foster Family Home placements have leveled off or decreased. This reversal in use of placement types is the most significant change noted in the data.

A negative side to this placement trend, statistically, is that children may end up staying in a kinship placement for a longer period of time which increases the number of children in placement and the length of time spent in placement.

Barth's belief is that without "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" and the passage of SB 1125, the number of children in care would be much higher.

Additional Factors

Experts in the field have suggested other factors that may have contributed to an increase rather than a decrease in the number of children in out-of-home placements. They include:

- increased number of teenage mothers and single parents,
- high child poverty rates - the 90's recession hit California and San Bernardino County long and hard.
- domestic violence - there is a growing awareness of this problem in our society but it continues to have serious repercussions for many of the families with children in care.
- parental mental illness - Mental Health's managed care system has created significant roadblocks for accessing care. This may become a growing problem.
- increased reports of child abuse and neglect - a better awareness in the community has led to an increase in reports.
- increased crime and gang membership - a study conducted in San Bernardino County in 1995 indicated that at some time during the family reunification process, 50% of all court petitions stated that one of the parents was in jail. (Albert, 1994; Tatara, 1991; Testa, 1992)

As stated earlier, there is a positive side to this research. A continuum of services aimed at strengthening the family and preventing out-of-home placement has started

and will continue to grow in the future. In addition to the legislation and services mentioned along with "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" recommended investments, federal, state, and local agencies are continually researching and implementing new policies and programs.

The Kinship Conference in February 1996 developed an action plan for promoting kinship placement which resulted in AB 1544 being passed in 1997. In 1998 the development of funding for relative guardian placements is being addressed.

Funding is always a major consideration in the development and implementation of new programs and the improvement of established programs. In 1997 a 6% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for basic foster care passed. This was the first rate increase since 1990. In 1996 San Bernardino County increased their Specialized Care Increment in order to keep more children in foster care rather than place them in group homes or with Foster Family Agencies. This not only saves money, it also places the child in the least restrictive, most home like environment.

California SB 163, Wraparound Service Pilot is another program currently being developed to provide intensive, individualized services and support to children and families with the most complex needs. The goal is to enable these children to remain in a stable, permanent, family-based living environment as an alternative to being placed in a

high level group home placement.

The main weakness of this study is the inability to attribute changes in the California and San Bernardino County foster care systems to the publication of "Ten Reasons to Invest in the Families of California" and the implementation of SB 1125 through the use of significant statistical analysis. Demographic changes, additional changes in the foster care system, or other forces operating in society such as those mentioned above may have contributed to any changes noted.

This thesis has opened up many more issues than it has resolved. As society grows and evolves it continually solves one set of problems while creating a new, seemingly more complicated set. With the implementation of Welfare Reform (PL 104-193 - Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996) and the ongoing changes in Child Welfare Services there will be tremendous opportunities to conduct research not only on the changing characteristics of children in foster care but on the changing characteristics of families in our society over the next decade.

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